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THERAPEUTICS OF MUSIC

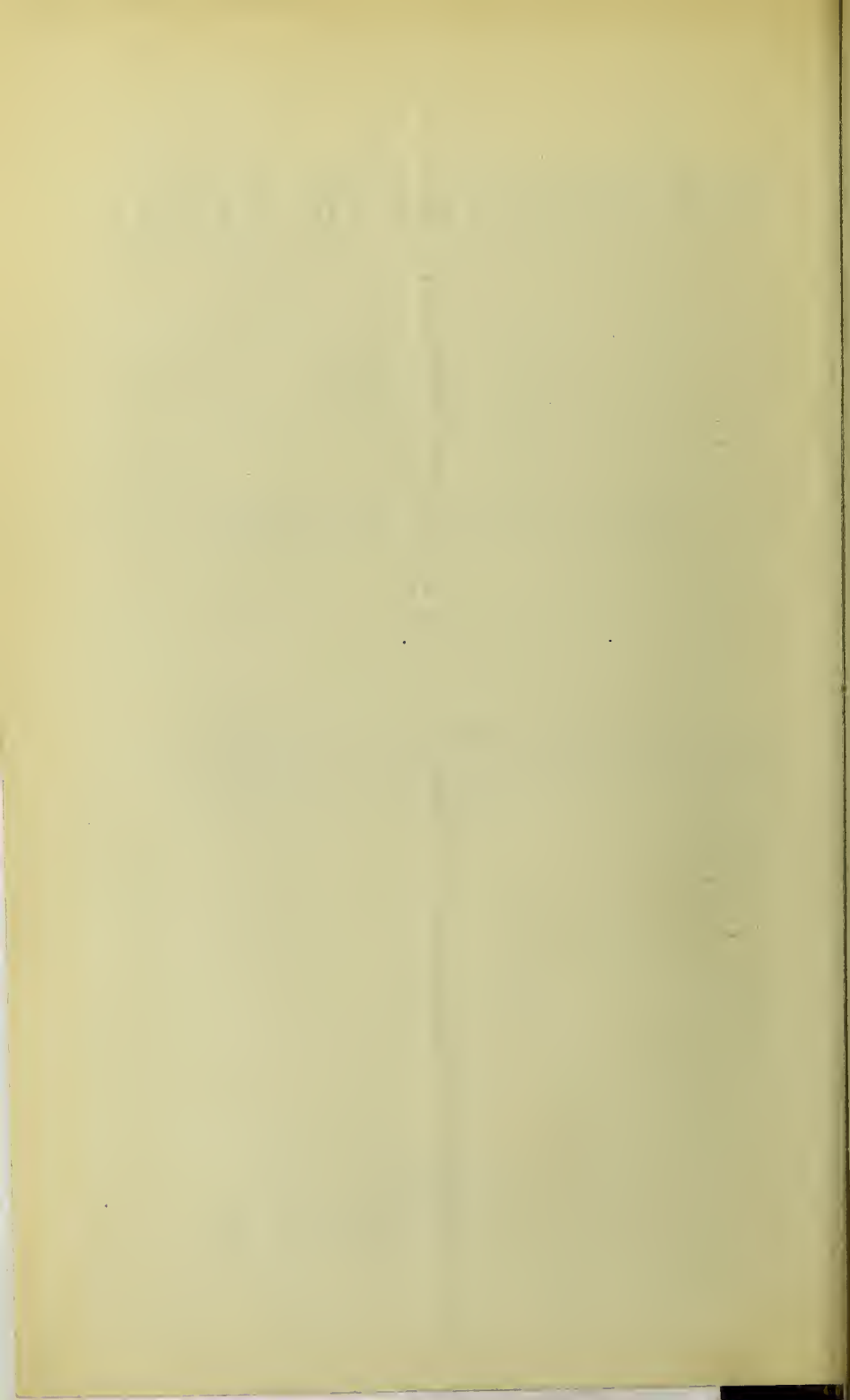
AND
ITS PROBABLE VALUE

IN THE TREATMENT OF
CERTAIN MENTAL DISORDERS

BY
G. HERBERT LILLEY, M.D., M.R.C.P.E.

SECOND SURGEON, H.M. CONVICT PRISON, PARKHURST, I.W.; LATE HOUSE SURGEON, BRISTOL
ROYAL INFIRMARY; ASSISTANT MEDICAL OFFICER, WARWICK COUNTY LUNATIC
ASYLUM; RESIDENT MEDICAL OFFICER, COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE
HOSPITAL, ETC.

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THE THERAPEUTICS OF MUSIC.

I HAVE endeavoured here to consider the value of Music, as a therapeutic agent, in treating certain conditions of the nervous system ; and, in introducing my subject, it will—in the first place—be necessary to dwell upon much that is contained in Mr. Haweis' valuable work on "Music and Morals," to prove that Music is the true language of all our emotions.

By emotions, thoughts are not necessarily implied, though the nature of emotions depends upon the nature of thoughts. Life itself is one chain of emotions, the more prominent of these being made manifest by our daily acts, while the less conspicuous never arrive at maturity.

Emotions are rendered evident by means of sound, and so it is that Sound is the connecting link between music and emotions.

By comparing the works of various composers with our daily thoughts, the close connection of Music with emotion appears. As ideas of some sort are always present in the mind, so, these vary greatly in importance, and consequently the musically expressed emotions in Schubert's writings fall far short of popular feeling in comparison with those of Mozart or Beethoven, because the writings of the latter are more occupied with giving expression to the higher emotions.

Having shown the importance of Sound as a connecting link between Emotion and Music, it is clear that the Brain—which is the factory from which all thoughts are supplied—is necessarily influenced by Music.

This influence differs in amount in different individuals, at different periods of life in the same individual, and in the varying conditions under which this individual is placed ; it likewise differs in the sexes.

Music has not the same effect upon all persons, and no effect whatever on, happily, but a few. Women, being more emotional than men, are more susceptible, as a rule, to musical influence. I know of a child who can be made to laugh by Music, and then to cry when the major key is changed into minor. Probably, in after years, this extreme susceptibility will, in part, wear away, although much will remain.

As to the condition, under which the subject is placed,—the soldier on the battle-field is often rendered, for the time, heedless of danger or pain by the inspiriting effects of Martial Music. The sailor is also influenced by Dibdin's songs. The effect produced by Scottish airs on Scottish emigrants, furnishes another illustration, as also the "Marseillaise" upon the French republicans in revolutionary times. Indeed, examples of such influence might be multiplied indefinitely.

We are also all familiar with the pleasurable and stimulating effect produced by dance music in the ball-room, while sacred music, on the other hand, has the very opposite effect.

It depends greatly upon the character of the music employed, whether it shall produce Emotions of an exalted nature or not. Haweis explains this by saying, that while some persons are content with compositions of a light and trivial nature—in short with Sentimentalism; others take up a more dignified position, and require a higher class of Music, to afford satisfaction, or, in other words, to indicate the emotions expressed. These latter he classes as Realists.

There are varieties in the quality of Music, which express this difference. The German illustrates the full sense of emotion in his writings, while the Italian, on the other hand, gives vent to trifling expression in music which is full of sentiment, but lacks substance. Here, Handel shines conspicuously above his rival, and Beethoven contrasts with Rossini.

It has been said that excessive musical exercise, or mental fatigue on the part of the composer, performer, or listener, in course of time weakens the intellect, and so impairs nutrition, and hastens death.

The contrary appears to me to be proved, by the age to which many of the greatest musicians have lived.

Handel, Haydn, Spohr, Gluck, and Rossini, with many others lived to ages varying from 70 to 90 years: while very many, including Beethoven, Bach, and Marcello, attained to more than 50 years.

No rule is without exception, for Mozart died at 35, Mendelssohn at 38, and Chopin at 39.

From this, it appears that Music has not a very prejudicial effect upon the nervous system, but rather the reverse.

We have all experienced what an invigorating effect cheerful music produces upon us in our gloomy moments; for man's spirits are not only indicative of his health, but are conducive, or prejudicial to a healthy condition of body, and no agency has such a mysterious influence over the spirits as Music.

Inanimate, as well as animate objects, are susceptible of this mighty influence.

In the latter case we need not go beyond our own homes for an illustration. We know what an effect Music has upon dogs, although few of them can be said to enjoy it. Its power is again seen in snake-charming in India; that venomous reptiles should be rendered harmless by musical influence is a curious fact. Illustrations to prove this power are numerous, were more needed. Musical sympathy, too, is seen in every-day life. The pet canary will suddenly break into song at an encouragement from a piano, and cease almost simultaneously with the instrument. Inanimate objects respond to certain tones produced by a musical instrument; this, perhaps, is but an acoustic phenomenon due to their construction. However, it is interesting to read in Greek mythology of the invaluable aid Music afforded to one Pythocritus of Lycion, who was an excellent player on the flute. He, it is said, kept off a pack of hungry wolves—who were minded to make a meal of him—by the soothing tones he produced on this instrument. Again, we read how the hundred eyes of Argus were lulled to sleep, one by one, by the sweet notes from Mercury's pipe, and how, when the last eye was closed, down fell the sword upon the monster's head, and the victory was won.

For another example of Musical influence over Inanimate matter—in ancient mythology—Mercury, it is written, gave Amphion a lyre, in order that he might practise Music. Now this same instrument, under the skilful touch of Amphion, caused the stones forming the walls of Thebes to move of their own accord, and to arrange themselves in the precise order in which it was intended they should be. So much for the influence of Music in both the Animate and Inanimate world.

Now, Music has been employed in all ages, to fulfil higher duties than those already mentioned, viz., as a means of treating disease.

Various results have followed musical treatment, and there have been numerous methods of applying this mode of cure. Music has been among the remedies at the physician's disposal, and it has been tried. Then arises the question—how has Music proved valuable to the medical man?

We find in Greek and Roman writings, that the medical value of Music was ascertained some 2500 years ago.

We are told, that in the time of one Athenæus, a famous Greek Grammarian, who lived in Egypt during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and was the author of a wonderful collection of facts entitled "*Deipno-sophistæ*," crowds of people at Thebes were cured of divers diseases by the flageolet. Again, Aulus Gellius maintains that music, the gift of the Muses, was invaluable in cases of bites and stings. The Athenians again, we read, could banish fever by a song. And, from the writings of Martianus Capella, we learn that Asclepiades, one of nine ancient physicians bearing that name, cured a deaf man by the sound of the trumpet. And further, Thales, the Greek musician and lyric poet, discovered that Music was better than medicine for stopping the plague. The instrument used by him was either the flute or the lyre, and his pœans had the effect of appeasing the wrath of the God Apollo, who visited the city with a plague.

It seems only reasonable to accept this theory of mythological origin, for the gods were to the heathen then, what Providence is to us now.

Xenocritus, the Greek lyric poet, and musician, is spoken of by Thales (?) as one having wonderful gifts, and it is asserted that madness under Xenocritus' charms was no madness at all. In the Bible also, we read in the Book of Samuel, "When the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Here, the possibility suggests itself that the nature of this evil spirit was some form of melancholia which became lost under Music's influence. We have, nearer home, another striking instance of spirit-depression succumbing to musical treatment. The patient here, was King George III. of England, who asserted that he could easily be roused into a cheerful frame of mind by sweet, and lively Music.

Music has, however, at times, proved a curse rather than a blessing. The old Welsh bards did *not* want to cure King Edward. They nearly drove him and his people mad. Their old songs so inspirited their own people, that the King could make no headway against them till he had treacherously murdered the old minstrels.

The foregoing illustrations will readily show that Music has, at all times, been employed therapeutically, and this leads me to trace the effect upon the nervous system of man, and so venture to suggest that much more might be made of so valuable a remedy as Music, than is at present the case.

Many of us have experienced a sense of tingling, or numbness, or increased warmth over some part of our bodies, while listening attentively to some well-executed and thrilling musical production. What is this sensation due to? The question is not a very difficult one to answer. It is the direct influence of Music upon the brain itself, and its effect is transmitted, by a reflex action, through nerve-media to the sympathetic system governing the vascular supply, and hence the changes felt by the listener are explained. The vessels are made to dilate by stimulation of the vaso-inhibitory nerves, or paralysis of the vaso-motor nerves, and so the blood flows freely, and imparts that sense of warmth which is felt by us, by reason of the local hyperæmia thus

produced. By blood-supply is nutrition effected. Therefore to improve nutrition, and consequently health itself, it is important that stimuli employed should be of a character favourable to this end. And what is there more universally attractive and beneficial, than healthy musical influence? The precise action of Music upon the vaso-motor system is this: the various musical tones, well assorted and carefully arranged, are carried through the outer and middle ear into the labyrinth, where each vibrates upon its own rod of Corti, and thus comes directly into contact with the filaments of the auditory nerve spread over these vibrating media; from thence they are conducted to the brain,—of course provided the nerve connections are healthy, and in good order. The manner in which the blood-vessels are afterwards reached, I have already described. This musical stimulus produces dilatation of the arterioles, and so circulation is increased, and in course of time nutrition is thereby improved. Hence a physiological property in Music is established, and upon this might be founded its utility for remedial purposes.

Now, the question arises, what conditions are likely to be benefited by this form of treatment? It appears to me that there are two opposite conditions, in either of which Music may prove a useful remedy.

Firstly, there are those diseases which require a tonic treatment, as melancholia in its varied forms produced by pregnancy, parturition, lactation, or the climacteric state: there is, too, that form of melancholia characterised by mono-mania, or by persecutorial delusions. Moral insanity with suicidal and homicidal impulse, or only accompanied by marked depression of spirits, would undoubtedly belong to the class requiring tonic treatment. There are, too, dyspeptics, hypochondriacs, those suffering from so-called liver disease (?) men of business who have sustained heavy financial losses, and others who have had severe family afflictions, and have become depressed in spirits. These are all included among the cases requiring the tonic form of treatment. Possibly Saul belonged to this class of patient, and of later date King George III.

As to the second class, these may be said to require sedative measures. Habitual drinkers—who may, or may not be subject to paroxysms of delirium tremens—also persons with irritable natures from over-worked brain are of this class; also, the so-called hysterical patients; those, too, with the mania of exhaustion, of pubescence, pregnancy, parturition, the climacteric, and the like. Also, those with a chronic form of traumatic insanity, whose paroxysms are too often induced by alcohol. All these conditions, I believe, may be benefited by musical treatment.

As much care, moreover, will be needed on the part of the physician in classifying patients for these two opposite qualities of Music, as would be necessary were the treatment medicinal instead of musical.

Many persons know only of Music, as Music, and have no appreciation for the great variety of quality in Harmony, more than a common-place division of all Music into Sacred and Secular.

In introducing the question of particular treatment, I must again refer to much that I have already written, and accept Mr. Haweis' division of people into Realists and Sentimentalists, excluding from both of these classes, only the extremely few who possess neither nature. The two opposite conditions requiring tonic and sedative treatment must be carefully noted. Here too, diversity of natures, age, sex, and surrounding circumstances, are points of the utmost importance.

For instance, military and naval airs are to the soldier and sailor, what selections from the musical classics would be to the musically refined; and, as to age, the popular nursery-rhyme must take its place, as well as the sentiments expressed by Verdi, in contrasting tastes of childhood with those of adolescence and puberty. Here, also, the female requirements must be duly considered with regard to emotional nature.

According to the varieties of human capacity, musical requisites cover a wide range. The beauties of Sacred harmony are often lost upon the unintelligent, while their place is filled by minstrelsy of a common-place nature.

I need not again refer to the importance of noting the particular circumstances under which each individual is placed, in dealing musically with his nature, for much has already been said of this.

All these may be considered as landmarks, to be noticed in the history of every particular case.

Great respect also must be paid to the quality of the music employed, selecting from the writings of the two great musical schools, in order that each individual nature may be satisfied.

In so far asserting the claims of Music to occupy a prominent place among therapeutical agents, it is but reasonable to accept the query: In what manner would Music supersede the remedies at present in use, for treating the various mental disorders mentioned?

With the first class of patients, the circulation is slow and feeble, the brain-centres being in consequence deficient in force: these patients too often have suicidal tendencies, and are otherwise depressed, and an asylum is in most cases their only prospect. Here it is, that the present system appears to me to need reform.

The mono-maniac, and melancholic nature, deprived of surrounding elements of sanity, must endure the still more depressing influence of asylum life, when a bright and cheerful atmosphere of musical sound instead, would, in many instances I believe, revive the dead brain into its former usefulness.

At present, the Pharmacopœia too often fails to afford a nervine tonic which will supply the place of this untried remedy. There is, in these cases, a something wanted: drugs fail, confirmed dementia too readily succeeds melancholia, and life soon becomes a blank. This sequence is, by no means, unfamiliar to anyone accustomed to deal with the insane in asylums.

Then again, let us consider the treatment for the second class of patients who may, for convenience, be classified under the heading—Mania.

With such, drugs are perhaps of more value, but these too

often fail, or are refused by the patient. Moral treatment is here of more importance than medicinal, and what could aid this course more effectually than Music?

With very few exceptions all insane persons like Music. I have repeatedly observed among the insane what is seldom met with in the sane, a large audience of very mixed natures, attentive for hours together at a musical entertainment.

There is no drug, so universal in its action, which will meet the requirements equally of maniac, melancholic, and idiot! and yet, where is Music?

It is true that an attempt is made, during the winter months in most of our asylums, to organise musical meetings; but, welcome as these efforts prove, more discretion is too often needed to make the entertainment attractive and healthy. To avoid the criticism of a susceptible audience, and the consequent failure in effect of the musical element, the Music itself must be well chosen, well executed, and scrupulously considered in relation to individual natures. Otherwise, it is of no value therapeutically.

There are numerous difficulties in the way of employing Music therapeutically, but experimental attempts for doing so might be made on a small scale.

To increase the existing musical element in asylums would be easy, and no great difficulty would attend the isolation of cases requiring this form of treatment. Provided this showed satisfactory results, plans on a more extended scale could be drawn up and adopted. The music, however, in order to be effectual, must be of the best quality, and devoid of impurities: it must be administered at regular intervals, and in suitable doses.

Obstacles would inevitably appear before such a course as the one suggested could be established. There were, however, obstacles to be overcome before seclusion and restraint in asylum life were replaced by the present humane system of light and liberty. The ultimatum of these suggestions would be, to eliminate from asylums all cases which might more favourably be treated in Institutions where Music reigned instead of Medicine.

Upon the moral value of Music, I have not room here to dwell. Its refining influence is well known. Let us, therefore, endeavour to promote musical interests; and, in doing so, bear in mind that music has, in all ages, been considered to possess healing properties, which have, at various times, been profitably exercised. However, much yet remains to be known before its therapeutic value is fully established. An adoption of the suggestions contained in these pages may tend materially to increase our knowledge of Music's hidden properties. I will now conclude with a quotation from the Merchant of Venice:—Lorenzo in reply to Jessica says of Music:

“ For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood ;
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music : therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and floods ;
Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils ;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus :
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.”